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Partnerships with the Oakland Schools: Lessons From the Past

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The University-Oakland Metropolitan Forum is a partnership of the University of California at Berkeley; California State University, Hayward; Mills College; Holy Names College; the Peralta Community College District; and the Oakland community.

University of California at Berkeley
Institute of Urban and Regional Development

Partnerships with the Oakland Public Schools: Lessons from the Past

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Introduction

The last two decades have known a multitude of initiatives, both on the part of the Oakland Public School District and on the part of "outsiders," to establish productive links between the schools and the community. What characterizes these efforts, besides their large number and variety, is the fact that they have been, for the most part, rather short-lived. One must immediately add, however, that the picture is not as bleak as it may seem. Not only did a few major partnerships survive and grow (e.g., the Marcus A. Foster Educational Institute), but new city-wide alliances are coming to life today (e.g., Oakland Partners in Education), and a wealth of more narrowly focussed or localized programs have withstood the test.

Both larger and smaller partnerships, even if successful, have to face a set of important obstacles. On the one hand, the failure of a partnership can be explained, at least in part, by the presence of specific problems. Survival, on the other hand, has often come despite these problems, thanks to the organizers' ability to anticipate and overcome them. Interviews with some twenty people, all of whom have a strong knowledge of past or present partnerships in Oakland, lead to two conclusions. One, the interviewees confirmed the importance of some of the factors that were identified, in an earlier paper, as crucial for the success of public-private partnership in general. (See "Characteristics of Successful Civic Partnerships: Lessons for Building a Children's Agenda," Working Paper No. 012 of the University-Oakland Metropolitan Forum, April 1989.) Second, there appears to be a set of obstacles that is specific to Oakland. Some problems seem to be particular to managers and employees of the Unified School District: a lack of continuity in leadership, a lack of motivation and self confidence, a lack of vision. Other problems can be seen as common to all partners, inside or outside the schools: a lack of planning for implementation and institutionalization, a lack of coordination and communication.

A more comprehensive list of critical factors can be summarized by means of a dozen key-words. These come up regularly in people's analysis of past and present experiences, or in their recommendations for positive change. The key-words are: politics, leadership, continuity, accountability, coordination, vision, planning, implementation, institutionalization, empowerment, motivation, and self confidence. We will consider each factor separately in a later section of this paper. Before doing so, we turn to a historical sketch of school partnerships in Oakland.

A Brief History of School-Community Relations in Oakland

What characterizes the programs linking the schools and the community is, first and foremost, their sheer quantity and variety. This multiplicity reflects the heterogeneity of the community itself. Another characteristic is the lack of coordination among these efforts. This lack follows, in part, from the complexity of the problems that parents, educators, and administrators face and from disagreement on solutions. Above all, however, this situation reveals a certain fragmentation and disarray in the educational system and in the community. Still, past and present projects have achieved many things, and they are building blocks on which to build for the future.

Many partnership programs have a narrow focus, in terms of activities or in terms of area served; they link schools to local colleges, churches, childrens' service agency, nonprofit organizations, etc. Despite their merit, all these efforts are too numerous to be considered here separately. The following historical sketch will therefore present only the larger alliances in some detail. (The reader can turn to the "Notes on Research Methods" on page 16 for a justification of this approach, and can also turn to page 14 for further information about partnerships between the schools and institutions of higher education.) Also, we will limit our observations to the period spanning the 1970s and 1980s.

As one person put it, partnerships come and go with superintendents. The story of the District's major collaborative efforts can be told by systematically going down the list of Superintendents since the early 1970s, from Marcus Foster to Pete Mesa. The story of these alliances and high-profile initiatives is a story of hope and frustration, of growth and decline, but also of renewed commitment.

The Marcus A. Foster Educational Institute was probably the first Public Education Fund in the country, that is, an organization that pools together private funds to support innovation and excellence in the public schools. Initially called the Oakland Educational Institute and created by **Superintendent Foster** as a District project, it was developed into an independent organization after his tragic death in 1973. The Institute's primary aim is to "link community interests and financial support to specific school improvement efforts." This goal is reflected in programs such as New Notions for Excellence, a small grants program started by Superintendent Foster himself (and still with us today) "which provides seed money for innovative and motivational projects that enhance teaching and learning in the classroom." The Institute is not only the sole major partnership that has been

successfully institutionalized for the long run, it is also a key element in new partnership efforts (for example by acting as fiscal agent for new organizations.) It owes its long-term success and its very broad respect in the community at least in part to its independence from the District and its politics.

Superintendent Foster also established other bridges between the schools and the community. He instituted a Master Plan Citizens' Committee and managed to get some of its recommendations implemented (for instance, with respect to school design and rehabilitation, or concerning community participation in the recruitment process for principals.) He also established a position of School-Community Relations Assistant in each high school (a position later abolished by Superintendent Love) and he developed strong contacts with the religious leaders of Oakland (a partnership later expanded and formalized by Superintendent Love.) During Foster's tenure, the collaboration between the schools and welfare agencies, which had started in the 60s, was still strong. Representatives from the schools and from the Associated Agencies in East and West Oakland held bimonthly meetings and used a case-management approach to help students at risk. (This collaboration was later weakened by higher workloads and a high rate of turnover within agencies and it was dealt a severe blow by budgetary constraints following Proposition 13. The District has recently engaged in an attempt to reorganize a similar type of collaboration with welfare agencies.)

After the death of Superintendent Foster and after the interim tenure of Robert Blackburn, Oakland continued to be a place of innovation in forms of community support for the schools. In the mid-70s, under the leadership of **Superintendent Love**, the schools got one of the first Adopt-A-School programs in the nation, by which businesses came to offer direct and targeted support to the schools. Though the program itself died after a few years, many adoptions are still in place and new ones started as independent efforts. In general, school-business partnerships have changed in nature over the last decade. Their emphasis has shifted from material and financial support from the company as a whole, to more varied and focussed support, in particular in the form of human resources (e.g., mentoring, technical assistance.) Under Superintendent Love's tenure, students also benefited from a Scholars and Artists in Residence program, which brought famous people to speak to student (and parent) audiences. Some of that is still present, though at a very different level, in programs that offer role models to children. Both Scholars and Artists in Residence and Adopt-A-School owed much to the energy and personal connections of Superintendent Love. Leadership on the

part of a limited number of CEOs (from the Kaiser Companies and the Clorox Company in particular) was also important. The loss of that leadership is one reason for the programs' demise.

Superintendent Love also oversaw the development of a major volunteer program, Education Core, which brought some 1500 individuals to tutor students or help teachers and some 250 people to participate in teaching itself (mostly through small presentations.) The volunteer program had started in the mid-50s as a grass-roots initiative, but it was not until the mid-70s that it was turned into a major, District-based program. A key person in this story was Electra Price, a volunteer organizer herself, who became Superintendent Love's Director of School-Community Relations. (She later became Assistant to Superintendent Bowick in charge of Community Relations and is now a consultant to Oakland School Volunteers, an organization in the process of formation to rebuild a strong volunteer program.)

Superintendent Love continued Superintendent Foster's work with religious congregations. She expanded the number of church leaders involved in the Ecumenical Advisory Committee and fostered the creation of more tutoring programs by churches. Many such programs are active today, some dating from that time, some more recently created. This committee was one of some fifteen Advisory Committees that worked with Superintendent Love and which involved members of the community (e.g., parents, business people, civic leaders.)

Most of the partnerships established in the 70s, even major ones, are now history or only subsist as shadows of their former selves. School adoptions and volunteering are still going on, but in an adhoc and uncoordinated way. Likewise, contacts with welfare agencies and churches still exist, but they are mostly informal and decentralized. The demise of important and promising initiatives may be due to many different factors, but the lack of continuity in leadership is certainly one of them.

The 1980s were an era of great discontinuity in the District, with superintendents succeeding one another at a rapid pace. Still, each one of them took the time to launch major initiatives in school-community relations. **Superintendent Bowick** supported the creation of what was perhaps the most ambitious partnerships in the city's history, the Oakland Alliance. The Alliance was inspired by the now famous Boston Compact; in fact, it was suggested to Superintendent Bowick as a replication project of the Compact model. The partnership therefore came to benefit from technical and financial support from

foundations and organizations linked to the Boston Compact (e.g., Brandeis University) and was put under the direction of a person recommended by these sponsors, Alan Weisberg.

Like the Boston Compact, the Oakland Alliance was based on a mutual agreement between the District and the business community, the core of which entailed that the schools were to improve the education of their graduates and companies were to commit a certain amount of entry-level and summer job positions to these graduates. The Alliance enjoyed the support of all major players in the area, from the Superintendent and important CEOs to elected officials and heads of colleges and universities. It also benefitted from the support of the Marcus Foster Institute, which served as its fiscal agent. Though the Alliance did get off the ground and did get some of its plans implemented (e.g., it was the origin of the Academies program, which has since been expanded), it lost its momentum and ultimately collapsed after the departures of Superintendent Bowick and of Executive Director Weisberg. Among the reasons cited for this failure, we find familiar (and interrelated) ones: political conflict, change in District leadership, lack of long-term commitment by public officials, exaggerated dependence on a couple of individuals, lack of community and school personnel involvement, lack of long-term financial security.

With **Superintendent Coto**, the emphasis of the partnership efforts to a certain extent shifted from school-business relations to school-university relations. The Promise Program can be seen as an equivalent to the university component of the Boston Compact, the Boston Higher Education Partnership. (See "Schools and Communities Working Together: Types and Principles," Working Paper No. 015, University-Oakland Metropolitan Forum, February 1990, page 8) The contract between the Oakland schools and East Bay colleges and universities stipulated respective responsibilities: instruction that prepares students better for higher education, on the one hand, and support from colleges and universities to help schools and students meet the new requirements, on the other hand. The business community was involved in this effort as well, in particular as a source of scholarship funds and of material support.

Superintendent Coto also started the Come & See Program, a small program to get Realtors (and other business people) to experience the situation in the school first hand. The goal was to change the public perception of Oakland schools, in particular for households and businesses who were considering moving to the city

but were concerned with its school problems. The fate of this program and its contemporaries was similar to the fate of earlier ones: they did not survive the tenure of the superintendent who had championed them or they were dramatically reduced after his departure

The history of the Promise Program provides a good illustration of this problem, but it also shows that things should not be seen in too black-and-white a way. On the one hand, the specific program was made more or less inoperative as a coherent effort after Superintendent Coto's departure. On the other hand, the endeavor is not really dead: not only are original funds still available (with interest on the principal available for college scholarships), and some of the activities that were started or further developed with the program are going on to this day. Local colleges and universities are still engaged in a great variety of programs linking them to the public schools, with U.C. Berkeley obviously having the strongest presence in this field. Some of those programs inform students about higher education and help them make it to college or university; others provide direct support to teachers in the classroom; yet others target instructional innovation and teacher empowerment in general. (See "Notes on Partnerships with Colleges and Universities," below, for more details.) Also, as already noted, volunteer activities, school adoptions by businesses, neighborhood-based after-school programs, magnet schools, and other projects continued during these years.

With the recent arrival of **Superintendent Mesa**, a new wave of initiatives has been taking shape. The superintendent himself seems to stand behind efforts involving parents in decision-making, while an administrator has taken charge of a new middle school program called STRETCH (Students & Teachers Raising Expectations to Challenging Horizons!.) This project is funded by a grant of the Clark Foundation and brings together District, foundation, and community energy. Community effort, in this case, is channeled through Oakland Partners in Education, an organization that is still in the process of formation and whose immediate goal is to re-create a city-wide adopt-a-school program, this time independently from the District.

The Chamber of Commerce is also very active, with its Education Committee working on three projects: refurbishing school libraries, creating a clearinghouse for material resources given by businesses to the schools, and bringing a strong volunteer program back to life. The latter project, which is the above-mentioned Oakland School Volunteers, benefits from the work of the Junior League and other

groups. Finally, of course, the University-Oakland Metropolitan Forum, the Urban Strategies Council, the Commission for Positive Change in the Oakland Schools and other organizations are at the forefront of community involvement in the current effort to improve the Oakland schools.

This brief sketch of major school partnerships in Oakland reveals that many initiatives have not borne fruit, or at least not a bountiful harvest. Quite a few have not even been able to reach maturity, falling victim to the internal problems of the District. Other partnerships managed to bloom and bear fruit, but only for a few seasons, finally succumbing to direct attack or to disinterest. Still others, very few, were not as dependent on the District for their survival and were less sensitive to changes in its administration, either because they had been planted in community soil from the start or replanted there after a while. In other words, distance from District politics (or at least the ability to cope with it) seems to be a critical factor in the development and well being of partnerships with the public schools. Yet as this historical sketch also suggests, this is not the only important factor; it is, in fact, only one factor among ten.

Analysis: Critical Factors

The following factors were distilled from interviews conducted especially for this report. As said in the Introduction, they tend to corroborate the findings of earlier research (i.e., a series of interviews with leaders of partnerships in other U.S. cities and a review of the literature.) These ten factors account, at least to a large extent, for the ups and downs of school partnerships, for their successes and failures. Though each factor is important in its own terms, all are interrelated and cannot be seen in isolation. All are critical in efforts to make school-community relations productive and beneficial to Oakland's children. All, from the most intractable to the most concrete, need to be considered in present and future partnership initiatives. Let us start with the most intractable.

- **Political climate**

  As present events within the District make clear, conflict-laden factors such as personal political ambition, race, and local autonomy exercise a strong influence on school-community relations. The history of partnerships in Oakland is replete with initiatives that have been nipped in the bud or put to an early end because of apriori mistrust or political strife. These problems are compounded by a general malaise in and around the schools. Too many students, parents, teachers, or administrators seem to have lost belief in the possibility of positive change.

- **Leadership**

  Any collaborative effort requires strong leadership, from both the community side and within the school. Good partnerships owe their success, even if temporary, to the commitment of key individuals -- a superintendent or a CEO, a program directors or a principal, a parent or a teacher who believes in a better future for the system, for a school, for a class, for a child. Because of the centrality of such people, the departure of a leader has often meant the demise of the enterprise he or she had helped to create. This has happened, for instance, when a new superintendent did not carry on the work started by his or her predecessor, when a committed principal or teacher left the school (or the profession) after designing and running a promising program, or when an economic downturn forced a business to put an end to its support for a program started with its help.

- **Continuity**

  This factor is perhaps the single most important one in our interviewees' analysis of the local experience with partnerships. The District has been plagued by a high turnover rate at all levels, from superintendents to teachers. This not only creates discontinuity in leadership and in District support for partnerships, it also tends to discourage people from initiating new collaborations with the schools. According to some interviewees, continuity of programs in the face of discontinuity in District personnel requires organizational independence from the school administration. This independence, however, must not come at the expense of a close relationship and a sense of mutual obligation.

- **Accountability**

  Quite a few community partners have felt a lack of accountability on the part of the School District. This problem is due in part to the above-mentioned turnover in personnel and discontinuity in leadership. It is also due, however, to the informal character of some partnerships. Both the comments of interviewees and the literature on the subject emphasize the need for formal commitments by all sides, with clear standards of accountability and measures of success. Although community pressure can help make the District more accountable, accountability in general can only result from better organization and communication.

- **Coordination**

  Another impediment to effective partnerships has been and is a lack of coordination. This problem plagues the relationships among different units within the District as well as those between the District and its partners. To a lesser degree, it also plagues the relationships between different community players. Lack of communication jeopardizes initiatives at their very core (e.g., partners are unclear about what they can expect from one another), while lack of cooperation makes for inefficiency (e.g., projects duplicating one another instead of joining forces.) Knowledge of programs at other schools or churches, knowledge of projects by other businesses or colleges, knowledge of initiatives by other nonprofits or alliances -- this knowledge seems to be extremely limited among interested people. The

primary object of coordination is the dissemination of information, not the imposition of central control. For instance, while a central office for community relations and partnerships may be an asset to the District, many people warn against the imposition of top-down control over so many programs.

- **Vision and Planning**

  Many interviewees argued that the District could make a much better use of partnerships if it developed a clearer sense of purpose and established plans for medium- or long-term action. This would create greater clarity about objectives and expectations and it would foster coordination. People who have approached the schools with the sincere desire to serve their needs have often been frustrated because school personnel could not identify these needs and could not specify how they wanted to be helped. A vision of "the better situation" and a plan to reach it make partnerships more effective; they motivate people and help make decisions about the allocation of resources.

- **Implementation**

  Partnerships have often failed because good ideas were developed without much thought given to implementation. The key aspect here appears to be involvement: only by involving those responsible for implementation at the planning stage can change occur. Indeed, organizers of successful partnerships (e.g., the ACCESS program) point to the fact that they did not try to impose a plan but worked hard to develop it together with the people affected, to offer a process rather than a product. Direct involvement of all parties will also increase the chances of long-term institutionalization.

- **Institutionalization**

  This term refers both to the long-term availability of funding and to the actual incorporation of programs by the school system. Therefore, while institutionalization of partnerships may demand long-term financial commitment on the part of the District (by adopting certain expenses as line items in the District's budget, for instance), it also requires that programs become part of the established curriculum or calendar. Because of the actual financial problems of the District, the institutionalization of new partnerships

in terms of funding will probably have to be taken care of, at least in part, by external funding. On the other hand, institutionalization of collaborative programs by the District in organizational terms must always be actively pursued: only if partnership programs affect change in instruction and regular activities (of students, teachers, and administrators) can they really improve the quality of education.

- **Empowerment**

  Involvement of some parties in the decision-making process often entails their empowerment. Demands for teacher or parent empowerment are very frequent nowadays, and they correspond to what some see as a condition for effective school-community partnerships, namely community support to those who are in the trenches, those who have the strongest impact on children. Principals too must be considered in this light: for some interviewees, a partnership with a school stands or falls according to the attitude of the principal. In fact, quite a few partnerships have been initiated and organized by committed school-site administrators.

- **Motivation and self confidence**

  Leadership and vision, collaboration and communication, long-term commitment and perseverance, all take root in motivation. But motivation, in turn, depends very much on self confidence. These ingredients, however, seem to be sorely lacking in the Oakland schools--students, parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators alike. Some argue that partnership efforts have been thwarted by passivity, by lack of belief in the very possibility of improvement. Likewise, broad-based community involvement in the process of improvement of the schools is predicated upon people's belief that they can make a difference. This brings us back to square one, to politics and community attitudes.

Recommendations

Both the list of critical factors and the historical sketch presented above contain implicit recommendations. It is unnecessary to spell out the most general advice here: it can be deduced quite easily from preceding remarks. For example, create continuity in leadership and management in the District, get full support from the superintendent and other key leaders, secure long-term external funding, establish clear goals and objectives, create broad community involvement, and so on. (The reader can also consult the "principles for action" presented in the above-mentioned Working Paper No. 012 of the University-Oakland Metropolitan Forum, "Schools and Communities Working Together: Types and Principles.")

What follows is a potpourri of suggestions made by interviewees. They are not presented as conclusions to this research, nor as a consensus among interested parties. They are simply ideas expressed by various people, who have first hand experience of school partnerships, in the course of discussions. Some of these ideas are practical recommendations, other are more theoretical guidelines.

- Build on present assets, for instance on existing organizations that have a strong track record (e.g., the Marcus Foster Institute), on past experiences (e.g., volunteering and mentoring programs), and on people already committed in other ways (e.g., include present informal volunteers in new formal volunteer program.)

- Help the District receive grants from foundations to supplement its own programs as well as its partnership programs.

- Consider private support, and in particular private funds, not as a substitute for public resources, but as a complement to them.

- Institutionalize partnership programs into curricula and other schedules of activity in order to make them last beyond the short-term.

- Do not limit business involvement to financial or material support for specific schools, but channel it also toward political activity (e.g., lobbying for more state funding), research, and direct involvement with students and parents (e.g., participation in mentoring programs.)

- Push for the creation of positions or offices within the District whose mandate is to coordinate the efforts of community partners in the schools, both at the central and at the school site level. For example, help re-establish a School-Community Relations Office and School-Community Coordinator positions.

- Make sure that people at all levels of the District know about and understand existing partnership programs. (This helps institutionalization and implementation and it reduces the effects of personnel turnover.)

- Increase communication within the District, between schools and central administration and among schools.

- Increase communication and collaboration among people and organizations working to help schools from outside (both in the community itself and in local government and services.) Orchestrate efforts, but first and foremost, organize the exchange of information and knowledge.

- Increase communication between the District and the community, both in a general way (i.e., public information) and in specific ways (e.g., meetings between school teachers and college or university professors.)

- Reach out to parents and help them understand what is happening in the schools, through direct contact with the school site and through other channels of information.

- Help the District plan for the long term and help it evaluate its problems, its needs, and its resources (both public and community resources.) Help it develop its information gathering and monitoring capacity.

- Involve teachers, principals, and other school-site personnel both in planning and implementation processes.

- Approach school personnel with an open mind and a willingness to listen. Do not try to impose solutions, but offer help in defining problems and designing solutions.

- Consider planning an ongoing activity throughout the lifetime of a program. Establish time constraints but give yourself enough time to effect significant change.

- Carefully monitor programs and projects and periodically evaluate their work.

- Make leaders and managers accountable for the results of the organizations they direct and build community pressure to achieve this.

- Staff partnership programs adequately, i.e., with full-time professional staff for any major program.

- Foster leadership within the District, on the part of teachers and principals in particular. Foster the establishment of career ladders for promising individuals. (This also helps create continuity in District management.)

- Train volunteers (and other people involved in partnerships) to interact with students, teachers, and administrators. Train District personnel to interact with the community.

Notes on Partnerships with Colleges and Universities

Colleges and universities have been and are involved in a variety of programs with the Oakland Public Schools. Many of these programs are meant to attract minority and economically disadvantaged students to college, to help them get there and do well once accepted. Such efforts have steadily grown in size and number since the late 60s, under particular pressure from activists and from the State (e.g., with respect to integration and affirmative action.) Programs include admissions counseling, tutoring, enrichment courses, college preparation classes, field trips to campuses, etc. Others are aimed at teachers, counselors, and administrators. Their goal is to improve instruction, counseling, and management through training, technical support, and empowerment. Example of this type of program can be found in joint seminars for college and high school faculty, or in workshops for math and English teachers. Still another way in which colleges and universities are present in the District is through the use of public schools as training ground for future teachers, that is, for students currently enrolled in the various education departments of East Bay colleges and universities.

University/college partnerships with the schools have three major goals: 1) to ease the transition between high school and college and, in particular, to get more poor and minority children into higher education, 2) to change the college or university e.g., to make its student body more representative of the larger community, and 3) to change the schools by improving teaching and helping schools reorganize themselves. Based, again, on limited information, a few patterns emerge. It is with respect to the first goal that most progress seems to have been made; for instance, more minority and poor students are taking college preparation classes and are making it to college. The greater presence of minority students has also had some impact on campuses. Yet college and university efforts have not made schools change much, and in some cases, not at all.

On the other hand, some programs, such as ACCESS (which is funded in part by U.C. Berkeley and in part by the District and is run by staff at the Lawrence Hall of Science), have indeed had an impact on the schools themselves. But progress is very slow and, despite the program's explicit emphasis on institutional change in the schools, the improvement it brought about is more significant in terms of student achievement (e.g., numbers of students taking college preparatory classes), or in terms of teaching (e.g., curriculum development) than in terms of organization and management. The prime reason for the lack of progress on this last front is one that

comes up many times in discussion with school partners in general: the lack of continuity in school administration personnel (i.e., high turnover rate), both at the school-site level and at the District level.

Although only a very small number of college or university administrators were interviewed, there seems to be a rather general complaint about the fact that university good will and effort are met with reticence or passivity by the District administration. Besides the lack of cooperation on the part of some school administrators and the lack of continuity in the School District, another problem is the duplication of efforts among various parties and, in general, the lack of coordination between them. On the one hand, the District itself may start a program that duplicates an existing program organized in the community, or vice-versa. For instance, UCO (University College Opportunities) is the District's equivalent to existing initiatives on the part of colleges and universities. On the other hand, duplication and lack of coordination sometime plague the activities of the institutions of higher education themselves. The sheer number of college or university programs may explain that fact (for example, the University of California at Berkeley alone is involved in more than 40 programs with public schools) as may the competition for promising minority students among colleges and universities.

Still, collaboration among these institutions (or between them and community or state agencies) is perceived as very feasible and likely. It is, in fact, already occurring. The East Bay Consortium of Educational Institutions, for example, is an organization created in 1979 to "increase higher education accessibility [for] low-income and traditionally underrepresented students in the Oakland, Richmond, and Berkeley school districts." The Consortium draws on the resources of 19 member organizations (universities, community colleges, school districts, private colleges, private high schools, and community agencies) primarily for the purposes of student identification and information provision, as well as for the organization of workshops, seminars, and academic enrichment programs.

A Note On Method

A detailed enumeration and description of all the partnerships, large and small, past and present, between schools and elements of the community was not possible given the time frame of this research--nor is it essential for our purposes. First, the object of this study is to suggest what general problems and opportunities are lying in front of a large-scale effort at restructuring the schools and at building coordinated school-community relations. Second, the main features of formal school-community collaboration can best be found by analyzing a selected group of large partnerships. What we can learn from the smaller ones follows primarily from their very number and variety. This diversity points at the heterogeneity of the Oakland community and at the multiple dimensions of educational problems, but also at a general climate of crisis around the schools. These are the conditions in which new city-wide partnerships must emerge.

In order to get at the key features of past collaborative efforts, twenty people were interviewed. Meetings lasted between 30 minutes and nearly two hours, and consisted of more or less open-ended interviews in which people were asked to "tell their story," to analyze their experience, and to present their sense of problems and solutions. Roughly two-thirds of the interviewees were members of the community (business, college/university, nonprofits), while one-third were former or present school leaders and administrators. A couple of the interviews were conducted in an earlier phase of research (January 1990.) No students, teachers, principals, or parents were interviewed, no human service providers were contacted, and only one representative of a neighborhood organization was interviewed. Even though this limitation in the diversity of subjects was is somewhat warranted by the need to focus scarce time on the history and general organization of school partnerships in Oakland, we very much regret it. Further research on the experience of parents, teachers, and others in these partnerships is therefore necessary.

List of interviewees

Lynn Baranco	Director, *Relations with Schools*, UC Berkeley
Ada Cole	Executive Director, *Marcus A. Foster Educational Institute*
David Goodman	Vice President, Public Affairs and Marketing Services, *Clorox Company*
Ralph Griffin	Former Coordinator of Student Services, *Oakland Public Schools*
Donald Hongisto	President, *Merritt College*
Dolores Jaquez	Executive Director, *East Bay Consortium of Educational Institutions*
Herbert Kitchen	Program Manager, *Interface Institute*
Ruth Love	President, *Ruth Love Enterprises* Former Superintendent, *Oakland Public Schools*
Marian Magid	*Contra Costa County Office of Education* Former Public Information Officer, *Oakland Public Schools*
Elliott Medrich	Lecturer, *Graduate School of Public Policy*, UC Berkeley Former Administrative Assistant to Superintendent Foster
Gala Mowat	Co-Chair, *Oakland Partners in Education*
Susanna Navarro	Executive Director, *The Achievement Council*
Evon Anderson	Marketing Coordinator, *Peralta Community College District*
Electra Price	Former Director, School-Community Relations, *Oakland Public Schools,* Former Executive Assistant to Superintendent Bowick

Louis Schell	Director, *ACCESS/CCPP*, Lawrence Hall of Science, UC Berkeley
Marilyn Snider	President, *Snider & Associates*
Peggy Stinnett	Former School Board Member, *Oakland Public Schools*
Fred Turner	Coordinator, Student Services, *Oakland Public Schools*
Alan Weisberg	Former Executive Director, *The Oakland Alliance*